



# U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

## Region 7 - Alaska

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Anchorage, Alaska 99503

(907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

**News**

For Immediate Release

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### **Help Minimize the Disturbance of Walruses along the Chukchi Sea Coast**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requesting your support and cooperation in minimizing disturbances to walrus herds along the Chukchi Sea coast.

Walruses are known to congregate on isolated beaches and barrier islands along Alaska's Chukchi Sea coast in late summer when concentrations of sea-ice are low. Between late July and early October, large walrus herds, each including as many as several hundred animals, may be encountered at resting areas (haulouts) near Cape Lisburne (68° 52' 53" N, 160° 11' 39" W), Corwin Bluff (68° 52' 30" N, 165° 06' 02" W) and Icy Cape (70° 19' 45" N, 161° 52' 55" W).

**WALRUSES ARE SENSITIVE TO HUMAN DISTURBANCES.** Walruses will often flee haulouts in response to the sight, sound, or odor of humans or machines. Trampling deaths associated with disturbance events are one of the largest known causes of natural mortality among walrus. Frequent or prolonged disturbances may even result in long term haulout abandonment.

**DISTURBING WALRUSES IS AGAINST THE LAW.** Operating an aircraft in a manner which results in disturbing, harassing, herding, hazing, or driving of walruses is prohibited under provisions of the Marine Mammals Protection Act and Federal Airborne Hunting Act.

### **YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO WALRUSES RESTING ALONG THE COAST.**

To make sure that walrus are not disturbed, please follow these guidelines when walruses are present in the area

Fixed wing aircraft should remain at altitudes greater than 1,000 feet above ground level (AGL) while within 1/2 mile of walrus groups. Helicopters should remain at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet AGL when traveling within one (1) nautical mile of a haulout. If cloud conditions necessitate flying lower than these recommended altitudes, ***please pass inland to avoid flushing walruses from the beach.*** Walrus are particularly sensitive to changes in engine noise and are more likely to stampede off beaches when planes turn or fly low overhead - ***please avoid unnecessary circling or turning while in the area of a walrus haulout.***

### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION.**

To report incidences of harassment contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement: 1-800-858-7621

For questions contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Marine Mammals Management Field Office

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